

Gifts that will have their senses working overtime **inside**

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Weekend



GETTY IMAGES

AWAITING A VERDICT

Amanda Knox says she's no 'assassin' as her case heads to the jury **6**

A HIRE CALLING

Obama calls on the private sector for ideas to create jobs **3**

OSCAR MATERIAL

'Up in the Air' takes George Clooney to new heights as an actor **28**



DECEMBER 4, 2009 | A PUBLICATION OF **The Washington Post** | NEWS, ENTERTAINMENT, ARTS, LIFESTYLES | **FREE DAILY**

Stay Tuned

If the Comcast-NBC mega-merger goes through, it could be the end of TV as we know it **7**





EYE OPENERS

Normally, We'd Suggest Calling the Police ...

A Long Island store owner who showed mercy to a robber says he's received an apology note and \$50 from the would-be criminal. Mohammad Sohail said the note's writer has a new job and a new child, and is staying out of trouble. The man tearfully told Sohail in May that he was trying to feed his family; Sohail gave him \$40 and bread, and made him promise never to rob again. (AP)

No 61-Inch Flat-Screen TV?

Fairfield, Ala., police say a Mississippi man hid in a Wal-Mart and tried to leave with cash. James Jefferson Jr. hid inside the Wal-Mart on Nov. 25 until after it closed at 11 p.m. and took \$54,000 in cash and checks. A guard subdued Jefferson when he tried to leave through locked doors. Chief Pat Mardis said Jefferson could have escaped if he'd waited 20 more minutes for employees to unlock the doors, but he got nervous. (AP)

'Bring Your Alien to Class Day' Canceled



A former Mesa, Ariz., school district employee used school computers to search for aliens, costing him his job and the district more than \$1 million. Brad Niesluchowski installed SETI@home in 2000; the software uses networked computers to analyze radio telescope data in hopes of finding extraterrestrials. But the program also interfered with technology use in classrooms. It will cost more than \$1 million to fix. (AP)

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The Big Picture

JAVIER GALEANO/AP



A COWBOY TRIES to wrestle down a steer during the 12th Cattleman's International Fair in Bayamo, Cuba, on Wednesday. The fair is a celebration of Cuban rodeo tradition and draws top riders from all over the island and other countries. (AP)



In Brief

CLEVELAND

Suspect in Serial Killings Pleads Insanity in Court

A registered sex offender accused of killing 11 women and leaving their remains in and around his Cleveland home pleaded not guilty by reason of insanity Thursday to all charges. Anthony Sowell, 50, is accused of murdering 11 women and attacking three others. (AP)

Sowell

WASHINGTON

New Life for Car Dealers

General Motors and Chrysler will reconsider dealership closures in a compromise meant to stave off federal legislation that would require them to keep showrooms open. The decision raises the prospect of new life for some of the more than 3,000 dealerships slated to close. The plans call for face-to-face reviews with dealerships. (AP)

MORROW, GA.

'Elf' Jailed in Bomb Scare

A man dressed as an elf was arrested after police in Georgia say he told a mall Santa that he was carrying dynamite. Police say Southlake Mall was evacuated, but no explosives were found. Morrow police arrested 45-year-old William C. Caldwell III in the incident. (AP)

Obama Turns Attention to Jobs

President seeks ideas to put millions of Americans to work

Washington

President Obama challenged an assortment of business and union leaders, and academics on Thursday to help him come up with innovative ideas for putting millions of Americans back to work, saying he wants the "biggest bang" for every dollar spent.

"We cannot hang back and hope for the best," Obama said. "What I'm interested in is taking action right now."

Obama said the leading question of the day is "How do we get businesses to start hiring again?" and asked his audience of about 130 guests to "bring their A-game."

But, mindful of growing anxi-



JEWEL SAMAD/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

President Obama and Vice President Joe Biden appear at the jobs summit Thursday.

ety about federal deficits, Obama also tempered his upbeat talk with an acknowledgment that government resources could go only so far and that it is primarily up to the private sector to create large

numbers of new jobs.

After opening remarks, the guests broke into different working groups to brainstorm with administration officials.

Dropping in on a session named

"We cannot hang back and hope for the best. What I'm interested in is taking action."

—PRESIDENT OBAMA, SPEAKING TO BUSINESS AND UNION LEADERS, AND ACADEMICS AT THURSDAY'S JOB SUMMIT AT THE WHITE HOUSE.

"Innovative Agenda and Green Jobs of the Future," Obama said, "Not to tip our hand too much, but one of the things I would be surprised if we don't end up moving forward on is an aggressive agenda for energy efficiency and weatherization. Because that is an area where we can get it up and running relatively quickly."

Obama spoke a day ahead of the government's release of unemployment figures for November. (AP)

3 Secret Service Agents Placed on Leave Over Dinner Crashing

Washington

The head of the Secret Service asserted Thursday that the security breach at last week's White House state dinner was an aberration but also acknowledged he has put three uniformed officers on leave because of the incident.

The chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee, Rep. Bennie Thompson, D-Miss., said the country is fortunate the affair in honor of visiting Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh did not end in a "night of horror."

Meantime, in an interview at the White House, President Obama said



JARAZI GHANBARI/AP

Secret Service Director Mark Sullivan.

that he "could not have more confidence in the Secret Service."

Appearing before Thompson's panel for questioning, Secret Service Director Mark Sullivan said his officers made mistakes.

"In our line of work, we cannot afford even one mistake," Sullivan said. EILEEN SULLIVAN (AP)

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World

In Brief



REMY DE LA MAUVINIÈRE/AP

A museum worker discusses the strike outside the Louvre Museum Thursday.

PARIS

Museum Strike Spreads

The Louvre Museum and the royal palace at Versailles were closed Thursday because of a museum workers strike that appears to be gathering steam. Workers are protesting government plans not to replace half of retiring public servants, which will affect museums. (AP)

CONAKRY, GUINEA

President Hurt in Attack

A renegade faction of Guinea's presidential guard opened fire on the African country's leader Thursday, slightly wounding him amid rumors of deep divisions within the army nearly three months after a military-led massacre of protesters at a peaceful rally. President Moussa "Dadis" Camara's military aide shot at him. (AP)

NEW DELHI

India Pledges to Slow Carbon Emissions Growth

India pledged Thursday to significantly slow the growth of its carbon emissions over the next decade. Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh told Parliament that India plans to reduce the ratio of pollution to production by 20 to 25 percent compared with 2005 levels, but it would not accept a legally binding emissions reduction target. (AP)

DUBLIN

Nuns Offer Child Abuse Victims Extra \$193.5M

A major Irish order of Roman Catholic nuns, the Sisters of Mercy, offered Thursday to pay child abuse victims, the government and charities a further \$193.5 million to compensate for decades of abuse in its schools and orphanages. (AP)

Knox Awaits Verdict in Italy Trial

American student accused of murder says she is not a killer

Perugia, Italy

American student Amanda Knox tried one last time Thursday to convince the Italian court trying her for murder that she is not a killer, urging jurors not to brand her with "the mask of an assassin."

Knox spoke at the end of a trial that has exposed some of the most intimate details of her life, with prosecutors depicting her as a promiscuous and manipulative she-devil who murdered her British roommate, Meredith Kercher.

The trial, in which Knox's ex-boyfriend Raffaele Sollecito is a co-defendant, is wrapping up after almost a year. Thursday's session was devoted to rebuttals by defense lawyers and the prosecution, and the eight members of the jury are expected to begin deliberations as early as Friday.

Standing up, her voice breaking as she fought tears, the 22-year-old from Seattle told the court that she feels "vulnerable" and fears losing herself after two years in jail.

"I am scared of being branded what I am not," she said, speaking in Italian. "I am scared of hav-



OLI SCARFF/GETTY IMAGES

Backstory

Amanda Knox's trial has made headlines around the world since it began nearly a year ago. Knox and Italian Raffaele Sollecito are charged with murder and sexual assault in the November 2007 slaying of Briton Meredith Kercher. Kercher was found fatally stabbed in the Perugia apartment she shared with Knox. Prosecutors allege Knox, Sollecito and Ivory Coast citizen Rudy Hermann Guede — who was already convicted in the death and sentenced to 30 years — killed Kercher in a drug-fueled sexual assault. Knox and Sollecito say they were not in the apartment that night. DNA from the crime scene allegedly linked to the defendants has been disputed in court. (EXPRESS)

ing the mask of an assassin forced onto me."

Prosecutors are seeking life sentences for Knox and Sollecito, while both defendants are pleading not guilty. Any verdict can be appealed by both parties.

The jury, which includes two judges, is not sequestered.

A verdict is expected Friday or Saturday, and Knox's family is expected to be in court. ALESSANDRA RIZZO AND MARTA FALCONI (AP)

Bomber Kills 22 at Somali Graduation Ceremony

Mogadishu, Somalia

A suicide bomber disguised as a woman attacked a graduation ceremony in Somalia on Thursday, turning a rare reason to celebrate into carnage that killed at least 22 people — including medical students, doctors and three government ministers.

The blast was blamed on Islamic militants who have shown a rising ability to carry out sophisticated large-scale bombings against high-profile targets — and highlighted the inability of Somalia's weak gov-



FARAH ABDI/WARSAHEB

ernment to protect even the small part of the capital it controls.

"Today should have been a day of celebration — not mourning," said Somalia's ambassador to Kenya, Mohamed Ali Nur. "The hopes of many parents who eagerly awaited their sons' graduation were recklessly dashed."

Several hundred people had gathered in the Shamo Hotel to watch the 43 medical, engineering and computer science students from Benadir University receive their diplomas when the blast ripped through the ballroom. (AP)

Hearsay

"I will think about it. There is still enough time."



VLADIMIR PUTIN, RUSSIAN PRIME MINISTER, RESPONDING TO A QUESTION ABOUT WHETHER HE WOULD RUN FOR PRESIDENT IN 2012. HE SPOKE AT A FOUR-HOUR Q&A WITH THE PUBLIC ON TV THURSDAY.

Change in Channels

Comcast's merger with NBC may permanently alter the television landscape

Washington

Comcast and NBC Universal announced their much-anticipated \$30 billion merger on Thursday morning, heralding a deal that would create a new entertainment powerhouse with a vast distribution network and a rich trove of television and movie programming.

Under the deal, which has been in the works for months, Philadelphia-based Comcast Corp. would pay \$6.5 billion in cash up front and contribute \$7.25 billion in cable assets to acquire a 51 percent stake in NBC Universal from its current owner, General Electric Co., which would retain a 49 percent stake. Comcast would control the joint venture's day-to-day operations.

If completed, the merger would give Comcast — the nation's largest cable and Internet service provider, serving 25 percent of U.S. homes — control over some of television's most-prized assets, including "The Tonight Show" and such reality hits as "The Biggest Loser" and Bravo's "The Real Housewives" series. In all, Comcast would own more than one out of five television viewing hours.



The NBC-Comcast merger raises concerns about the amount of power that the cable giant would hold if the deal is approved.

24M

The number of cable TV subscribers in the U.S. who use Comcast, about a quarter of all customers. Comcast's most distributed network, E! Entertainment, reaches 96 million homes. NBC reaches 113 million homes, about 98 percent of U.S. TV households.

For entertainment viewers, the deal means Universal Pictures movies could get to cable faster.

TV shows could appear on mobile phones and other devices faster as part of Comcast's plans to let viewers watch programs wherever they want. Comcast already is letting subscribers

watch cable TV shows online in trials, with a nationwide launch this month.

The prospect of Comcast wielding such great power over a changing media landscape has worried competitors and consumer groups, particularly as the entertainment industry makes an uneasy transition from television to the Internet, and the deal will face close scrutiny from the government.

Consumer interest groups immediately criticized the deal, saying the public interest commitments announced along with the merger don't address key questions such as how Comcast would price NBC shows and channels for competitors.

Comcast has not explained how the joint venture would deal with online video distribution.

Comcast said it will allow com-

What's Next

Legal Hurdles

Comcast Corp. will likely have to accept substantial conditions if the cable TV provider wants to win regulatory approval for control of NBC Universal's library of programming. Although federal regulators probably won't block a deal outright, they could prohibit Comcast, for instance, from denying rival subscription-TV services such as DirecTV access to NBC channels and other programming. A full review by government regulators could take a year or longer to complete. (AP)

petitors access to NBC Universal content as outlined by federal program access rules.

It will keep NBC's free over-the-air broadcast programming and its dozens of local broadcast stations — programming that regulators see as key to keeping people connected to their local communities.

Analysts caution that previous major media mergers have failed to live up to their promise, most notably the marriage of Time Warner and AOL in 2001.

Earlier this year, Time Warner announced plans to spin off struggling AOL, a deal that will be completed next week.

"In a way, this is like back to the future," said Roger Entner, senior vice president for communications industry research at IAG Nielsen. "We've seen this before and other companies have failed, but that doesn't mean this won't work. Comcast is best suited to pull this off. It all comes down to execution." CECILIA KANG AND PAUL FARHI (THE WASHINGTON POST)

THREE BIG CHANGES

The pending merger between Comcast and NBC Universal is a sign that media providers are moving toward a new business model that gives them authority over content — a development that is expected to change how viewers will watch their favorite TV shows and movies in the future. If the deal is pushed through, consumers will see several effects:



1 More content, fewer subscriptions. Since NBC Universal owns the leading online video site (Hulu) and Comcast owns the third-largest (Fancast), a merger would mean a boost in content, fueling this new platform.

2 One-stop viewing. Ownership of NBC's broadcast and cable networks, and the Universal Pictures library, will help Comcast sell its services. If the deal is finished, no cable provider will have as much exclusive content as Comcast.

3 Online viewing outside TV. Comcast will be able to integrate its cable, Internet, and mobile phone services with its new library of content, allowing subscribers to access a vast number of shows and movies in new ways. (CS MONITOR)

Local

Md. to Bar More Oyster Dredging

Gov. O'Malley hopes to save population of dying iconic species

Annapolis, Md.

Maryland intends to bar watermen from dredging up oysters in a dramatically larger area of the Chesapeake Bay, Gov. Martin O'Malley said Thursday, as the state tries to save an iconic species that has dropped to 1 percent of its historic population.

In a news conference at a former oyster-processing plant in Annapolis that is now a museum, O'Malley said that state environmental regulators have proposed closing 24 percent of its "oyster grounds" before next year's oys-



BRIAN WHITTE/TWP

Gov. Martin O'Malley, center, announces his plans to restore the Chesapeake Bay oyster population during a news conference at the Annapolis Maritime Museum.

ter season. Only 9 percent of oyster grounds are off-limits now.

O'Malley said the plan was

intended to replace "the put and take and replace and shuffle" approach of recent decades. In that

time, the state spent millions trying to save both the oysters and the watermen who catch them, by paying to grow oysters in hatcheries, then dumping them overboard for watermen to catch.

"We can do better," O'Malley said. "We need to do better. This is something that is long overdue."

The change could mean a landmark cultural change in the bay's waterside towns. Traditionally, Maryland's watermen were free to dredge up oysters from almost any spot on the bay bottom. The plan O'Malley announced would limit their movement and provide funding to shift them toward a different method of harvesting oysters: farming them.

DAVID A. FAHRENTHOLD AND JOHN WAGNER
(THE WASHINGTON POST)

The Lotteries

Thursday, Dec. 3

Maryland

Mid-day Pick 3.....	2-0-2
Evening Pick 3 (Mon.).....	6-2-3
Mid-day Pick 4.....	2-9-0-5
Evening Pick 4 (Mon.).....	3-5-2-7
Match 5 (Mon.).....	4-10-16-20-38 (22)
Multi-Match (Wed.).....	4-11-18-22-39-41

District

Mid-day Lucky Numbers.....	9-2-5
Evening Lucky Numbers (Wed.).....	2-7-2
Mid-day DC 4.....	4-2-1-6
Evening DC 4 (Wed.).....	1-7-0-2
Mid-day D.C. Five.....	0-5-7-0-9
Evening D.C. Five (Wed.).....	2-3-5-0-0
Daily 6 (Wed.).....	3-15-17-24-33-34 (38)
Hot Lotto (Wed.).....	3-15-18-21-34 (15)

Virginia

Mid-day Pick 3.....	8-4-6
Evening Pick 3 (Mon.).....	2-3-5
Mid-day Pick 4.....	0-6-4-0
Evening Pick 4 (Mon.).....	9-0-0-0
Mid-day Cash 5 (Tues.).....	2-5-7-10-21
Evening Cash 5 (Mon.).....	21-24-27-29-31

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Metro Fare Increase Proposed

Washington

Metro's projected budget gap for next year has grown significantly — to \$175 million — and Metro managers Thursday made preliminary recommendations to close much of it through fare hikes, service cuts and staff reductions. But even those rough estimates met with the board's disapproval.

The budget presentation to Metro board members gave no specifics about the types or amount of fare increases under consideration. But officials are recommending that more than half of the total budget gap, or \$92 million, be made up through fare increases.

The forecast presented Thursday for the budget year beginning July 1 is much gloomier than what officials discussed in September, when the budget gap was estimated at \$144 million. Officials said the main reason for the growing gap is the bad economy. LENA H. SUN (THE WASHINGTON POST)



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The Feed

MUST-SEE ITEMS FROM AROUND THE WEB

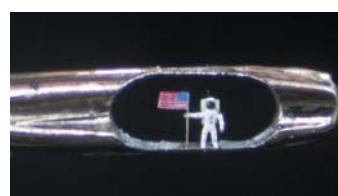


'Reality' Is Relative

1 From Esquire magazine's Webcam-ready cover featuring Robert Downey Jr. to trading cards that "come alive" in 3-D when viewed on a computer, this year was full of experiments in augmented reality — that is, incorporating virtual data into the "real world." In an article and a collection of online videos, the Christian Science Monitor reveals some of the innovators involved in "augmenting" daily life. Who knew the U.S. Postal Service was so ahead of the curve?

140-Characters Issue

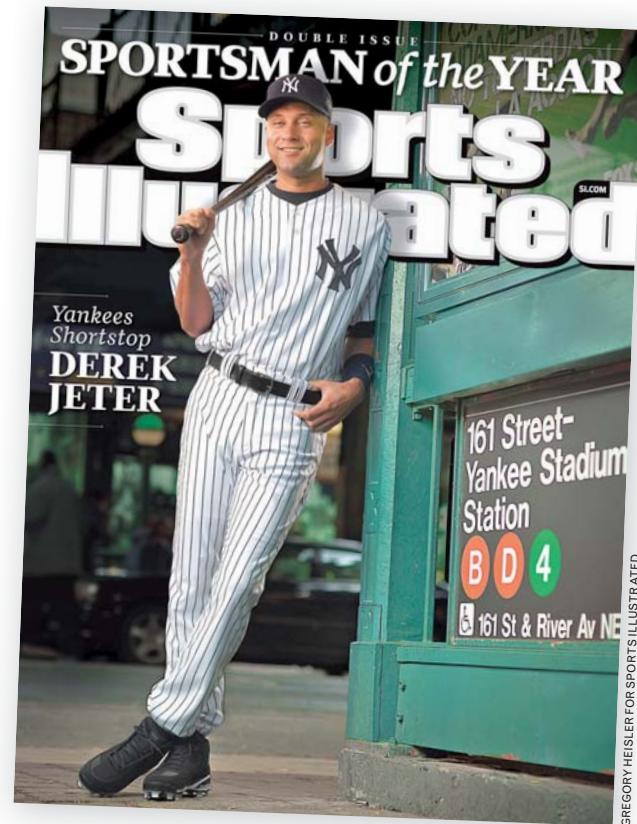
2 According to a head count by Slate's Christopher Beam, 185 members of Congress currently have accounts on Twitter. It's surprising that so many lawmakers have time for online chatter, but if Twitter is all the rage on the Hill, what are the other 350 members of Congress waiting for?



WILLARD WIGAN

Wee Wonders

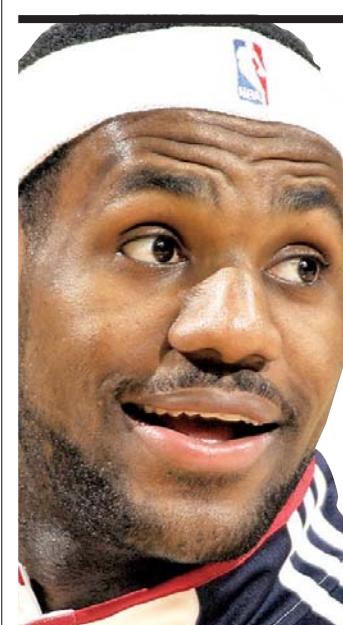
3 Just how tiny is the art of Willard Wigan? "Once, I inhaled [a sculpture of] Alice in Wonderland," Wigan told The Post. Wigan's handmade micro-sculptures, which fit inside the head of a sewing needle, have become famous for their astonishing artistry and detail. His work is on display at the Parish Gallery in Georgetown, but you can also get a taste of Wigan's small achievements in a photo gallery at washingtonpost.com.



GREGORY HEISLER FOR SPORTS ILLUSTRATED

Turning a New Page?

4 As journalists fret over whether magazines have a future in digital formats, Time Inc. shared its vision for a high-tech glossy in the coming months or years. A YouTube video gives us a peek at how Sports Illustrated might look if it were revamped for viewing on a tablet computer — complete with cover photos that seamlessly turn into video footage and a new format for the annual swimsuit issue.



Full-Court Finesse

5 Maybe LeBron James really does want to switch sports. One month after saying he could help the NFL's Cleveland Browns, the NBA superstar hit nothing but net when tossing a football across an entire basketball court after a Cleveland Cavaliers practice this week. Cleveland's Fox 8 News captured the feat in a video posted online — complete with plenty of slow-mo replays. As if Browns fans weren't already desperate for an infusion of talent.

Find these links and more at expressnightout.com/thefeed

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SE

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SE

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Herndon, Va.'s Scottie Reynolds leads Villanova against Maryland Sunday.

► Friday

NOON Find out who the United States will play in South Africa during the World Cup draw. ESPN

7 P.M. The Wizards seek their third-straight win as they visit the Toronto Raptors. CSN

8 P.M. The Bulls head to Cleveland for a showdown with the Cavaliers. ESPN

10:30 P.M. The Miami Heat take the court against the Lakers. ESPN

► Saturday

12:30 P.M. The reigning NCAA basketball champion North Carolina Tar Heels take on John Wall and the Kentucky Wildcats. CBS

3:30 P.M. USC wraps up a subpar football season against Arizona. ABC

7 P.M. Alex Ovechkin serves the final game of his suspension as the Capitals take the ice against the Flyers. CSN

8 P.M. Georgia Tech faces Clemson in the ACC football title game. ESPN

► Sunday

5 P.M. George Washington versus Navy is the under-card for Maryland against Villanova in the BB&T Clas-sic. MASN

6 P.M. The Wizards take on one of Flip Saunders' old teams: the Detroit Pistons. CSN

8 P.M. Bowl invitations are handed out on the BCS Selection Show. FOX

8:15 P.M. Brett Favre leads the Vikings versus the Cardinals. NBC

The Impossible Dream

If Alex Ovechkin is this good already, wait until you see him angry | 22



Redskins are aiming to spoil the Saints' march to perfection

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With just three wins in 11 tries, the Redskins have forsaken any hopes of running the table for an improbable playoff berth and are only left to take satisfaction in derailing their remaining opponents' seasons.

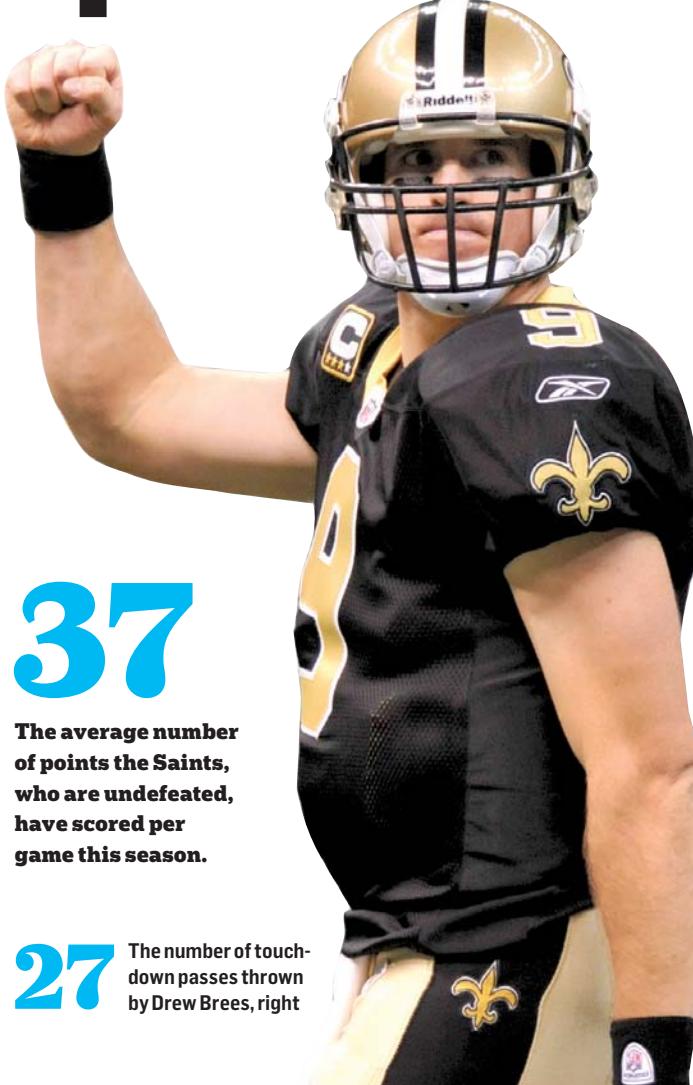


Whether you want to call it playing the spoiler or pulling an upset, the Redskins' most productive action at this point would be to ruin the hard work of others.

They'll have no better chance to do that than this weekend against the Saints. New Orleans — which lost to Washington at FedEx Field last season — arrives in D.C. this weekend with an 11-0 record, five wins away from becoming the first NFC team to go undefeated.

They're scoring 37 points per game. They just thrashed the heralded Patriots. And they represent one of the Redskins' last chances to create a positive memory this year.

"It would mean something [to beat New Orleans] because it is an undefeated team and we are play-



37

The average number of points the Saints, who are undefeated, have scored per game this season.

27

The number of touchdown passes thrown by Drew Brees, right

ing the role of the spoiler," receiver Santana Moss said. "You spoil any and everything you have in your way."

Unfortunately, they're up against one of the best creators in the NFL. Quarterback Drew Brees has been destroying opposing defenses since he showed up in

"You spoil any and everything you have in your way."

— REDSKINS WR SANTANA MOSS, ON WHAT THE 3-8 REDSKINS HAVE LEFT TO PLAY FOR THIS SEASON

the Bayou. He has 27 touchdown passes already this season, but also has a backfield that's fifth in the league in rushing yards per game (150.5) and tops in the league in rushing touchdowns (18).

"Statistically they've been superior this year," Redskins coach Jim Zorn said. "We want to be competitive and this is one of the elite teams this year in the National Football League. So we have to be ready for it, no matter what our record is."

Stopping the Saints is only half the equation. Washington mustered 24 points on offense last week — the first time they've passed the three-touchdown mark this season. But New Orleans has forced an NFL-best 32 turnovers and scored seven defensive touchdowns under one-time Redskins defensive guru Gregg Williams.

"They are going to come from every direction," quarterback Jason Campbell said. ERIC BRANDNER

Three reasons an upset is unlikely

Too many points:

The Redskins' season-high in points (27) is just a field goal better than New Orleans' season low.

Too many weapons:

Ten different Saints have caught TD passes. With DeAngelo Hall out, how will everyone get covered?

Too few cheers:

Big upsets need big fan support. Will the fans give up if Washington struggles early?



THE TOO-FAST LANE

NFL defenses can't stop Minnesota Vikings star running back Adrian Peterson, but the Minneapolis police can. Peterson was cited for speeding after police clocked him driving 109 mph in a 55 mph zone on a suburban Minneapolis highway on Saturday around 8:30 p.m. The tailback was in his BMW en route to the team hotel when he was pulled over. (AP)

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GIFT GUIDE 2009



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WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Last June, six Express readers began a 12-week journey that would change their lives - the Gold's Gym Get Fit Challenge.

Contestants teamed up with trainers at Gold's Gym locations throughout the D.C. metropolitan area to slim down, tone up, and become their healthiest.

Altogether, the group lost almost 200 pounds!

Gold's trainers used

Gold's 5 Components of Fitness:
Goal Setting, Nutrition, Cardiovascular Health, Resistance Training and Education and Professional Assistance

to help Challengers reach their peak fitness levels.

So what has become of our heroes and heroines?

Have their fitness routines continued now that they are out of the public eye?



bonus, Meaghan says the challenge "made me realize that my health was my top priority." Meaghan says her physical conditioning has improved dramatically. Meaghan works out five days a week and trains weekly with Jenny. "She knows my limits and pushes me to work as hard as I can."

POST CHALLENGE: "I've added vegetables into every meal of the day, whether it is throwing diced peppers into an omelet or cubed squash into my chili."

TRAINER: Jenny • **GOLD'S GYM:** Ballston



PART OF THE TEAM
LARRY entered the Challenge to focus on himself for once. That decision led him to lose 49 pounds and to join the Gold's Gym family. He's now a part-time Gold's Gym Membership Advisor! Larry says his fitness journey is a great way for him to "break the ice for anyone reluctant to discuss any issues and reservations about exercising and good eating habits." Larry also has more fitness plans on the horizon: he wants to become a Body Jam instructor.

POST CHALLENGE: "Working with Gold's gives me the chance to inspire anyone that walks through the door!"

TRAINER: Chris • **GOLD'S GYM:** Midtown

NOT RUNNING ON EMPTY

GREG is a dad who had trouble sticking to a fitness routine. By the end of the challenge, he had lost 27 pounds. He says the variety of exercise options at Gold's was key to creating a workout that wasn't routine. Greg still attends classes like RPM and Body Pump because, "I feel like I burn the most calories during the shortest amount of time." Classes like Body Attack and Abs are also on his to-do list.

POST CHALLENGE: "I can now run a mile with no problems whatsoever, and I'm looking forward to running several 5ks and 10ks next year."

TRAINER: Michael • **GOLD'S GYM:** Rockville Town Square



Such as 'lose 2 pounds a week, or shave 1 second off my best time.'

TRAINER: Erin • **GOLD'S GYM:** Merrifield

NEW SKILLS AND A NEW FRIEND!

JAMIE wanted the energy to handle the rigors of police work and the family she hopes to start one day. She finished the contest 22.2 pounds lighter. Jamie says the Challenge inspired her to become an RPM (cycling) trainer. One of the best rewards of the challenge is her friendship with her trainer Erin. The duo gets together twice a week to run or work out.

POST CHALLENGE: "Erin showed me how to take it step by step to accomplish the overall goal. Now I set my sights on smaller objectives, such as 'lose 2 pounds a week, or shave 1 second off my best time.'



SHARP-DRESSED MAN
ANTHONY entered the Get Fit Challenge to balance fitness with a busy schedule. By the end of the 12 weeks, Anthony had lost a total of 34.8 pounds. It's still sometimes difficult finding time, but he manages at least 3 workouts a week. Anthony says Gold's focus on nutrition as well as exercise had a lasting effect. In addition to the weight he's lost and muscle he's gained, Anthony says he's able to fit into clothes he had forgotten about.

POST CHALLENGE: "I'm stronger, more disciplined, and more confident."

TRAINER: Cameron • **GOLD'S GYM:** Fairfax Station



MAXIMUM MOM

KIM wanted to attack her diabetes. She had lost 29.8 pounds by the end of the Challenge. Kim says her A1C average and blood pressure numbers have gone way down, but her energy level is through the roof. "I have more energy to play with my 13-month old son. We have so much fun!"

POST CHALLENGE: "I've been able to cut my medicine to the lowest dose possible and my doctor is considering taking me off all together. I am so grateful!"

TRAINER: Tasha • **GOLD'S GYM:** Capitol Hill

Now's your chance to follow in their fitness footsteps!

Our former challengers will tell you, it's more than getting fit - it's about finding your inner strength. So we've decided to call the next challenge, the **Know Your Own Strength Challenge**.

December 2nd, Gold's Gym and Express will start looking for six hopefuls to compete in the Know Your Own Strength Challenge.

Contestants will receive 12 weeks of personal training, guidance on healthy nutrition and an unlimited 12-week pass to Gold's Gym.

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Challenge Yourself To Know Your Own Strength!



gift '09 guide

Loot to Thrill

Sleigh bells ringing. Tannenbaums twinkling. Eggnog hitting your taste buds. The holiday season amounts to an assault on the five senses, mostly nice (except the endless loop of "Wonderful Christmastime" blasting at the mall). Drawing on yule's all-points charm, we suggest scoring presents meant to be touched, tasted, smelled, seen or heard. That could mean an eye-popping vintage bracelet for your fashionista pal or a gadget to chill your wine-loving father's chardonnay. That way, your family and friends both receive and perceive, perhaps the most thoughtful gifts of all. **JENNIFER BARGER AND BETSY LOWTHER (EXPRESS)**



HIP SHOT

The Blackbird Fly camera shoots old-school, square-format photos with 35mm film (\$125, Momastore.org), making it ideal for both steampunkers and tech fiends.



STAR BRIGHT
Suzanne Somersall's dangle gold vermeil and white sapphire earrings add a touch of twinkle (\$215, [Ginger, 7114 Bethesda Ave., Bethesda; 301-664-9242](http://Ginger7114.com)).

ARM CHARM

J. Crew stocks granny-chic jewelry, but wouldn't you rather give the real thing, as in a bejeweled vintage clamper bracelet from the Jackie O. era? (\$165, [the Hour, 1015 King St., Alexandria; 703-224-4687](http://TheHour1015KingSt.com)).



COLOR ME WARM

Jazz up your friend's beige sofa with Koko's cotton kaleidoscope throw, which can also be ordered in sizes big enough to cover a boring white bed (\$162, 2modern.com).

VIEW POINTS

The weather outside might be frightful, but your loved ones (and their homes) can still look delightfully stylish. Treat aesthetes with eye-catching extras, from dazzling earrings to rainbow throws.

GRAPHIC NOVELS

Designer Coralie Bickford-Smith took literary masterpieces ("Jane Eyre," "Great Expectations") and covered them in cloth and dramatic motifs (\$14 each, Amazon.com).



CHIC DREAMS

For jet-setters (or stylish insomnia), give Cris Notti's silk sleep masks, which feature Pucci-esque swirls or Japanese florals (\$20, [Proper Topper, 1350 Connecticut Ave. NW; 202-842-](http://ProperTopper.com)



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BARNES&NOBLE



Best/Worst Gift

"My favorite gifts are gift cards—anything \$50 and up, preferably. They're just so flexible—you can get whatever you want or regift them. I hate getting fruitcakes. If you're not family, stay away from baked goods." **Elaine Mensah, co-host, Fashionbsradio.com**

GIFT REPORTS BY ALISON PETERS

HAUTE NOTES

Local illustrator Inslee Haynes' glamour gals strut their chic stuff on cards (\$18-\$22 for 10, Urban Chic, 1626 Wisconsin Ave. NW; 202-338-5398).



Scratch some gifts off your list.

Holiday Scratch-offs, priced from \$1 – \$10, are the perfect gift for everyone on your list. They're fun, fast and one size fits all. Plus, they offer top prizes ranging from \$1,000 – \$100,000. Now that's a festive fortune! Stop by your favorite Maryland Lottery retailer and pick up a stocking full.



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POWER PUFFS

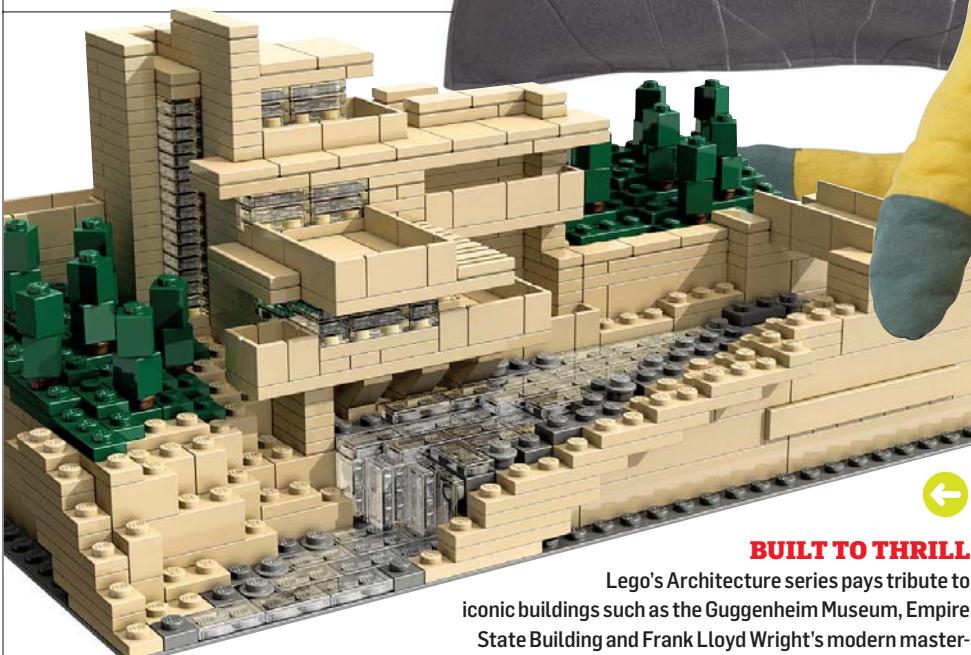
D.C.'s Gretchen Cook creates wool felt pillows blending mod style with hot hues, meaning they'll work in a loft or a Logan rowhouse (\$85-\$95, RCKNDY, 1515 U St. NW; 202-332-5639).



Best Gift

"My husband got me a big new closet while I was away visiting family before the holidays. He turned my tiny Georgetown closet into a big walk-in with light, something sorely lacking in the previous incarnation. He even moved my clothes, hats and accessories in without a speck of drywall dust!"

Anna Fuhrman, owner, Proper Topper



BUILT TO THRILL

Lego's Architecture series pays tribute to iconic buildings such as the Guggenheim Museum, Empire State Building and Frank Lloyd Wright's modern masterpiece, Fallingwater (shown, \$100, Momastore.org).



FEEL GOODS

Whether you go cushy (snuggly knits, huggable toys) or uncrushable (not-just-for-tots Legos), a tactile gift shows you're a real softy. Plus, these presents offer a way to reach out and touch someone without inciting a restraining order.



SIMIAN GIFTS

Give and Take's Scrap Monkey is sewn from vintage T-shirts, meaning it's both softer and more PC than a made-in-China teddy bear (\$32, Giveandtaketees.com).



STRAW PULL

A woven raffia clutch ideal for that New Year's beach vacay comes trimmed in yellow, black or white patent (\$57, Hysteria, 125 S. Fairfax St., Alexandria; 703-548-1615).



MATEY FINE

Smathers & Branson's needlepoint Jolly Roger lends Jack Sparrow flair to a preppy wallet (\$115, Sherman Pickey, 1647 Wisconsin Ave. NW; 202-333-4212). Eye patch not included.



TOP CHOPS

A handle cut from the same marbleized acrylic used for bowling balls adds sharp style to a high-quality knife (\$100, Hill's Kitchen, 713 D St. SE; 202-543-1997).



TOP CHOPS

A handle cut from the same marbleized acrylic used for bowling balls adds sharp style to a high-quality knife (\$100, Hill's Kitchen, 713 D St. SE; 202-543-1997).

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DIGITAL EVOLUTION

Warm her hands, not the planet, with Preloved mittens, stitched from recycled wool sweaters (\$22, Nana, 1528 U St. NW; 202-667-6955).



BLOOM SERVICE

A low-key alternative to a rhinestone pin, these hand-knit Peruvian wool flower brooches bring funky style to lapels or bags (\$14 each, Tabletop, 1608 20th St. NW; 202-387-7117).



Best/Worst Gift

"The best gift I've received was an Art Nouveau vase that was in my friend's apartment. I complimented it every time I went there, and she finally just gave it to me. The worst is anything from the office gift exchange. It's always a lot of crap. I usually give a bottle of wine and everyone fights over it." **David Dennis, owner, RCKNDY**

FUZZY FEAT

For kicking back by the fire, J. Crew's shearling men's mocs boast rugged style and cushy interiors (\$65, Jcrew.com).



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Sebastian LaCause, Timothy Ware, Addi McDaniel. Photo by Scott Suchman.

Valerie Vigoda, photo by Joan Marcus

**RING TONES**

A clementine orange mid-century phone (which also comes in red, green, turquoise and lemon) has been restored to work with modern technology (\$195, Anthroologie.com).

**MUSIC, BOXED**

No bells or whistles here: Simply plug an MP3 player into this handmade mahogany and maple speaker by Boston-based Dinsmore's Workshop for a blissfully basic way to amplify tunes (\$56, Mjdinsmore.etsy.com).

**MELODY SHAKER**

Four handheld sound-makers—including this bead tumbler—turns a pack of kids into a mini-orchestra (\$26 for four, Giggle, 5330 Wisconsin Ave., Chevy Chase; 301-664-6407).

SOUND INVESTMENTS

The holidays mean lots of harkening and hearing, from silver bells ding-a-linging to herald angels singing. This hit list of melodic presents—from an antique-y brass bell to a super-modern wireless radio—should help ring in the new year.

**TWEET THIS**

Handmade bird callers (like this one for sandpipers) make cheap stocking stuffers for nature lovers (\$45, Apres Peau, 1430 K St. NW; 202-783-0022).

**Best/Worst Gift**

"The best and worst gifts I've ever gotten were from boyfriends. One year, a guy I was dating gave me a potted orchid—so much cooler and more romantic than cut flowers. In high school, another guy gave me dangling dolphin earrings. He just didn't know any better." **Rachel Cothran, blogger, Projectbeltway.com**

**IMIX MASTER**

Records, schme-cords: Mod DJs can use Merkury Innovations' portable iPod mixer to scratch, spin and groove (\$120, Urban Outfitters, 3111 M St. NW; 202-342-1012).

**KNIT WIT**

Cheeky hand-knit bird rattles by Bla Bla Kids meld soft textures, bright colors and engaging sounds (\$32, the Blue House, 7770 Woodmont Ave., Bethesda; 301-656-6088).

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BREW POINTS

Ten brightly colored organic tea bags form the Teastar, which doubles as a tree decoration until after the holidays (\$30, Apres Peau, 1430 K St. NW; 202-783-0022).



COLD, LESS THAN A CASE

Chill pinot grigio or sauvignon blanc one goblet at a time with Skybar Wine Chill Drops, which cool vino 20 times faster than a fridge and don't water the stuff down like ice cubes (\$50 for two, Skybarhome.com).

CHOMP CHANGE

Encourage Fido to leave your shoe collection alone by giving him a Jimmy Chew toy to gnaw on (\$18, Simply Soles, 1438 Park Road NW; 800-909-3679; Simplysoles.com).



Best/Worst Gift

"One year, a pair of sexy, strappy Christian Louboutin heels were left on my front porch without a note, which made it that much more romantic and special. The worst thing I've gotten was a set of cookware. I don't cook; I only bake. It's like getting a dog person a cat thing." **Kelly Muccio, owner, Lost Boys**



PRETTY, SWEET

Philosophy's Red Velvet Cake bubble bath and lip gloss set turns the old Southern dessert into lickable, lathering tub treats (\$15 for both, Philosophy.com).



OLD ST. NIP

Cater to your favorite F. Scott Fitzgerald (or just a camper who craves something more potent than trail mix in his backpack) with Stanley's manly metal flask (\$25, Sundance catalog.com).



DOLCE VITTLES

Way-beyond-the-Olive Garden recipes (Radicchio with Horseradish, Apples and Asiago) and scenic photos star in "The Italian Farmer's Table" (\$20, Amazon.com).

TASTING BOOM

Visions of sugarplums may work for "Nutcracker" fiends, but foodies and oenophiles would like you to put your (gift) money where their mouths are. Here's a feast of gourmet or just plain appetizing presents.



ART FORMS

Since kids like snacking on Play-Doh as much as shaping it, swap in this all-natural version made with fruit and veggie extracts (\$20, Giggle, 5330 Wisconsin Ave. NW, Chevy Chase; 301-664-6407).



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DESSERT CART

Spices of the bush, sands and savannah—potent Moroccan harissa, megawatt devil chiles—headline in a set of fresh, exotic spices for adventurous cooks and culinary daredevils (\$40, Flavorbank.com).



NEON BAGEL?

Chrome toast-ers seem so early aughties. Update Mom's kitchen with Bodum's bright toast roaster, which comes in lime and other hot hues (\$80, Home Rule, 1807 14th St. NW; 202-797-5544).



Worst Gift

"I've been the recipient of some pretty ugly household gifts. Several years ago, one family member—who shall go unnamed—gave me a very tacky engraved desk accessory that had my name spelled incorrectly. Another time, I received a figurine of a human body with a horse's head. It's pretty creepy." **Jennifer Donohue, owner, Treat**



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LAB PARTNER

Flowers go mad-scientist cool in a test-tube vase with three vessels, which could also be used for oddball, odorous experiments (\$19, RCKNDY, 1515 U St. NW; 202-332-5639).



SMELL WONDERS

A nose full of Eau de Douglas Fir or Grandma's pie might get you in the spirit of the season. But we suspect this arsenal of aromatic gifts, from berry-scented salves to a tabletop herb garden, will work, too.



CHIC LIT

Kobo's organic soy candles boast natural scents such as Portuguese olive blossom and come in pretty patterned canisters worth repurposing (\$36, Tabletop, 1608 20th St. NW; 202-387-7117).



RING ZINGER

The abstract flower topper of Marc Jacobs' newest scent, Lola, gets reinvented as a glam cocktail ring that slides open to reveal a solid perfume inside (\$42, Bloomingdale's, 5300 Western Ave., Chevy Chase; 240-744-4700).



SNIFF TEST

Like Trivial Pursuit, but for grape geeks, Wine Wars amounts to a thinking person's drinking game, with somewhat-tough questions about which vino goes best with brie (champagne, for the record) (\$18, Amazon.com).

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FOAM, SWEET FOAM

Rip off the vibrant, beribboned packaging of MOR's soaps to reveal richly scented, triple-milled bars (\$15, Apres Peau, 1430 K St. NW; 202-783-0022).



BALM SQUAD

Holidays bring lots of gatherings—and lots of dirty dishes. Soothe the hardworking hands with the Savannah Bee Company's blackberry-scented salve (\$25, Hill's Kitchen, 713 D St. SE; 202-543-1997).

Best/Worst Gift

"My favorite aunt is very hip and stylish, but she used to get me the most ridiculous presents, like a velvet and rhinestone heart-shaped purse or an orange sequined sweater. The best thing she ever gave me was a bucket of gift cards and a leather passport holder with a ticket inside to New York City. We went together, and it's become an annual tradition." **Kelly Collis Fredrick, Cityshopgirl.com**



SEEDY FIND

Even brown thumbs will find it easy to grow herbs, flowers and other fragrant plants with the Garden-in-a-Bag, a tidy package of seeds, dirt and a leak-proof bag (\$8, Pottingshed creations.com).

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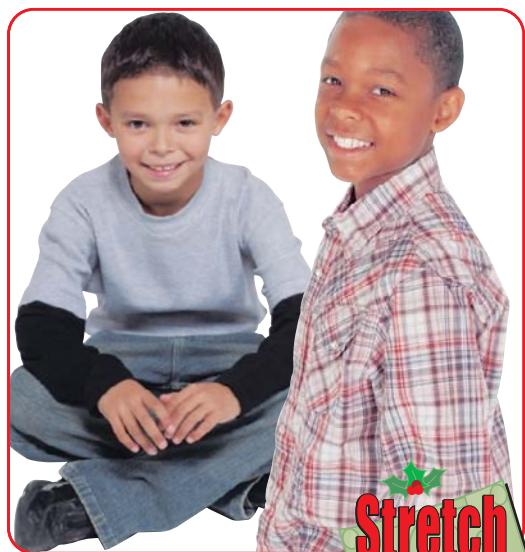
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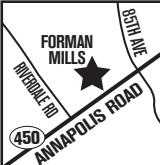
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Got Present Tensions?

Scoring someone an ideal cadeau requires thinking outside the gift box

Santa has it easy. The big elf gets people (often under 10) to just tell him, by letter or lap communication, what they want for Christmas or whichever holiday they mark. But for the rest of us, in an age of gift cards, experiential presents and more variations on the Kindle than there are books in the Library of Congress, we're stuck mind-reading what would make Aunt Suzie, Gramps or a pal smile, or at least not gag.

"Selecting the right gift in any culture is a big deal. And in each culture it's different," says Gary Weaver, professor of international communication at American Uni-

tailored to their needs and interests. What's appreciated? A gift the recipient can tell the giver has put thought into," says Nancy Mitchell of D.C.'s Etiquette Advocate, a firm that helps folks watch their P's, Q's and G's (um, gifts).

A slim budget doesn't mean you can't score a winning cadeau. A personalized gift means many things, from a ritzy ring to a gift card from a loved one's favorite shop (kitchen emporiums for cooks, mod boutiques for fashionistas).

For the truly clueless shopper, prepaid credit cards amount to the gift of choice. But choosing how much to spend requires a balance between generosity and reality. "It's a mistake to try to determine the amount to spend based on the recipient's income," Mitchell says. "Base gifts on your finances."

Just whatever you do, advises Ron Goodstein, retail expert and

"People want something tailored to their interests ... a gift the recipient can tell the giver has put thought into."

versity. In other words, a fruitcake-shaped doorstop from Wal-Mart won't please everyone (er, anyone) on your list. For presents with a big-bang factor, pros say the secret lies, like a suit, in a custom fit.

"People want something that's

marketing prof at Georgetown University, don't get caught up in slashed rates at big-box chains. "Do you really want to give your mother a toaster or a deep-fryer?" Consider a sad fact of holiday giving: At some department stores return



rates are 50 percent.

That's one reason some givers swear by munchies or spirits. "A consumable is a great gift for someone who has everything," Mitchell says. "But match it to the person." In other words, no 200-cookie baskets for dieters or booze for Uncle Bill, the teetotaling pastor.

Sometimes, the most generous gift is a donation to charity. Then, too, "the most sincere thing you can give is time," Mitchell says, whether it's an offer to shovel a neighbor's driveway or an IOU to cook dinner for a kitchen-clueless chum. Other times, nothing tops the gift of experience: cupcake-decorating classes, sailing lessons or a weekend at a cozy B&B.

But no gift is a guaranteed hit, a truth Weaver knows well. In 1989, the AU professor was charged with selecting gifts for VIP delegates, from heads of state to royals, attending a meeting of the International Postal Union. "We spent weeks finding a gift," he says. "In some cultures, you can't give a watch — it's bad luck. White flowers mean death in many cultures. Finally, we decided that the universal symbol of friendship is a crystal pineapple. We were convinced it was perfect."

That is, until just before the event, when the U.S. arrested Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega, nickname "Piña" (translation: pineapple). "With all the planning in the world, sometimes you just can't get the right gift," Weaver says. KATIE KNOROVSKY

An advertisement for Gaylord National's "Christmas on the Potomac". The image shows a large glass-enclosed atrium with a Christmas tree and lights. A red and gold sign in the foreground reads "GAYLORD NATIONAL'S Christmas on the Potomac NOV. 19 - JAN. 3". Below the sign, it says "Tree of Light". The overall theme is a festive holiday atmosphere.

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THE REDSKINS WILL WIN IF ...

1 It snows Sunday.

Washington — which will likely be without cornerback DeAngelo Hall — needs Mother Nature to help, or it may have a snowball's chance in hell of stopping the Saints' dynamic passing attack. With Pierre Thomas and Mike Bell, New Orleans can run well, but it's not as scary as Drew Brees' dropping back to throw. Alas, snow is forecast for Saturday, not Sunday.

2

2

The Saints suffer a letdown.

After a dominant showing against New England that answered any last doubters, New Orleans may let up its guard just a bit. An interception here, a fumble or two there and it could be a ballgame. That's assuming Redskins QB Jason Campbell can avoid any miscues and continue to find a rapport with second-year players Devin Thomas, Malcolm Kelly and Fred Davis.

3UP, 3DOWN

HOW THE REDSKINS COULD WIN OR LOSE THIS WEEK

THE REDSKINS WILL LOSE IF ...

1

Drew Brees is serious about winning the NFL's MVP award.

The Saints quarterback is at the helm of one of the league's two undefeated teams and leads the league in touchdowns (27) and passer rating (112.6). Yet it's Brett Favre getting all the intention. Brees needs to add to his already gaudy stats in the final five games to claim the trophy.

Santana Moss stays in hibernation. While he is the Redskins' leading receiver, Moss has not had more than 50 receiving yards since the bye week. His status as a Redskins Pro-Bowler who is not injured has brought more double teams, but extra coverage never seems to slow other top-flight wideouts. Now that the offense has shown some life, it's time its top threat does the same.

2



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3 They take a cue from the Oompa Loompas.

Willy Wonka's helpers are short, indentured and orange — but they're not the ones turning into giant blueberries. Defects and all, they push through until they prevail — and then sing about it. The shorthanded Redskins need the same against-all odds attitude to pull out a sweet win.

SAM GREENWOOD/GETTY IMAGES



FLORIDA (1) VS. ALABAMA (2)

Story Line: The winner of the SEC championship game stakes claim to an invitation to play for the national championship. Gators QB **Tim Tebow** aims to add to his legacy against an Alabama defense that is second in the nation in points allowed. (4 P.M., CBS)

TEXAS (3) VS. NEBRASKA (22)

Story Line: Texas will attempt to lock up the other national championship spot, but QB **Colt McCoy** and company will have their hands full in the Big 12 title game against a Nebraska defense that is relinquishing just 11.1 points per contest. (8 P.M., ABC)

CINCINNATI (5) AT PITTSBURGH (15)

Story Line: Should Texas slip up, the Bearcats could be playing the Panthers with a national title game berth at stake. Cincy must corral Pitt's **Dion Lewis**, the nation's fourth-leading rusher, to stay perfect. (NOON, ABC)

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College Kickoffs



FLORIDA (1) VS. ALABAMA (2)

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sports

Terrapins Pursue Marquee Win



College Basketball

The first month of the college basketball season always brings a mixed bag of games for a major-conference program.

There are the gimme games — small schools put on the schedule to boost a big school's confidence and help the team find a rhythm. And there are the legit games, often as part of early season tournaments, which give a program an opportunity to test itself and possibly announce to the nation that it will be a contender as fall turns to winter and March Madness ushers in the spring.

The Maryland Terrapins (6-2) have been neither terribly impressive nor terribly disappointing thus far. They can make their first serious statement on Sunday when they take on No. 3 Villanova (7-0) in the BB&T Classic at Verizon Center.

Thus far, Maryland's gimme games have been, well, gimmes. They slam-dunked five wins over teams such as Indiana University of Pennsylvania and Chaminade. But they were beaten soundly by Cincinnati and Wisconsin on back-to-back days at the Maui Invitational. This week, they used a second-half surge to slip by Indiana (of Indiana) in the ACC-Big Ten Challenge.

"We lost to two good teams," Maryland coach Gary Williams said. "Cincinnati is going to beat a lot of people. Wisconsin is Wisconsin. ... You need more than a day to



Greivis Vasquez had been in a shooting slump until scoring 23 points Monday.

prepare for Wisconsin."

The Terrapins' victory over Indiana was made possible by the first true standout performance of the year by senior Greivis Vasquez. The Venezuelan guard shot his way out of a slump and scored a game-high 23 points to go

About the Wildcats



Villanova is led by senior Scottie Reynolds, a native of Herndon, Va., and have five players averaging in double figures scoring. In November, the Wildcats edged George Mason by a single point, but the Terrapins should be their biggest test of the season. (DT)

with eight assists.

Williams had been waiting for such a game from the team leader. "I'll take him playing like he did [Tuesday] anytime," Coach Gary Williams said. "That was a great performance out there under a lot of pressure." DEREK TURNER

Swengali

Angry Ovechkin May Be Joy to See

Alex Ovechkin has a message for the NHL: "You won't like me when I'm angry."

Nursing a slight knee injury that might have kept him out of the lineup anyway, the Great 8 will be missing in action this weekend because of a two-game suspension.



The penalty is a result of a knee-to-knee hit — considered a dirty play by many hockey observers — on Carolina's Tim Gleason. Not deterred, Ovechkin was unusually curt at practice Wednesday, saying little except that the suspension made him "angrier." He also vowed not to change his ways.

When the two-time MVP returns to the ice, his opponents better watch

Chances are, Caps coach Bruce Boudreau will talk some sense into his best player.

out. He's already a great player when skating just for fun. Now Ovechkin has a chip on his shoulder, perhaps feeling that he's being singled out unfairly.

Whether the NHL assessed the proper punishment is irrelevant. In the end, it's just going to motivate Ovechkin. But maybe not in the way the Russian is saying.

Despite Ovechkin's pledge not to tone down his physicality, chances are Caps coach Bruce Boudreau will talk some sense into his best player.

Ovechkin doesn't do Washington any good injured or suspended. Anger is fine, but that energy would be better used focusing on scoring even more goals.

If you thought Ovechkin was good before, just wait and see what he'll do next.

To reach Matt Swenson, e-mail matt.swenson@readexpress.com

Sunday Pick'Em

Matt Swenson
SPORTS EDITOR,
EXPRESS

Clinton Yates
SPORTS EDITOR,
EXPRESS

Dan Steinberg
DC SPORTS BOB,
THE WASHINGTON POST

Angie Goff
MORNING SHOW HOST,
WUSA9-TV



Saints (minus 9.5) at Redskins

SAINTS

The Redskins actually look like an NFL team now, but they're not pulling the upset.

SAINTS

Even a so-called let-down week for the Saints could mean a blowout performance.

SAINTS

Redskins have covered in three-straight games. This one might cover (your eyes).

SAINTS

A win here could salvage some of this year for the Redskins. Too bad it won't happen.



Eagles (minus 5.5) at Falcons

EAGLES

Atlanta barely beat Tampa last week and Philly is way better than the Bucs.

FALCONS

A win last week without Ryan proved a lot to me. How much, we'll see.

EAGLES

Still don't understand how people are claiming the NFC East is overrated.

FALCONS

The explosiveness of the Philly offense will suffer without DeSean Jackson.



Cowboys (minus 2.5) at Giants

COWBOYS

Anyone else notice how vastly overrated the NFC East is this season?

GIANTS

Two things I don't do: Pick the Redskins ever, or the Cowboys after Thanksgiving.

GIANTS

What's that you say, it's December now? Sorry, Tony.

GIANTS

This is a must-win for New York, and Dallas likes to fall on its face in December.



Ravens (minus 3) at Packers

PACKERS

The frozen tundra is going to hurt a lot when the Ravens' playoff hopes crash.

RAVENS

Baltimore needs this game far worse than Green Bay does.

PACKERS

Short man Ray Rice can easily disappear in several inches of snow.

PACKERS

Where will Baltimore stand in the playoff picture after taking a loss here?



Alabama (plus 5.5) vs. Florida

FLORIDA

Tim Tebow may not make a great pro, but he's the best there is the colleges.

ALABAMA

Mark Ingram and the Crimson Tide will definitely not be asleep at the wheel.

FLORIDA

Because the world needs to see another BCS title game with Tebow.

FLORIDA

Tim Tebow and the Gators may have played their best game last weekend.

Season Tally: Matt Swenson: 29-14; Clinton Yates: 27-26; Guests: Angie Goff: 33-20; Dan Steinberg: 22-25; Arnie Applebaum: 7-8

Hofstra Folds Football Squad

College Football

In the wake of rising costs and waning interest, Hofstra University dropped football and will use the \$4.5 million spent annually on the team on other priorities.

The board of trustees voted unanimously Wednesday night to shut down the program, which had been in existence since the school's founding in 1937.

Hofstra players will remain on scholarship or, should they transfer, be eligible to play for another school immediately. (AP)



Hofstra coach Dave Cohen argues a call.

By Matt Swenson | To reach Matt Swenson, e-mail matt.swenson@readexpress.com

weekend **12.04.2009**

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In 'Up in the Air,' George Clooney hits new highs as a corporate lowlife **28**



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PARTY TIPS FOR GLAMAZONS, RETRO STYLE MAVENS AND ECO-WARRIORS **26**

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KELLY CAMPBELL

Julie Powell

WRITER, BUTCHER, THERMOMETER EVANGELIST

In "Julie & Julia," writer Julie Powell recalled how she cooked every recipe in Julia Child's "Mastering the Art of French Cooking" in a year. After Powell's book's success (it inspired a film by the same name), she found herself with marriage woes and self-doubts. Powell sought refuge working as a butcher, which she juicily recounts in "Cleaving: A Story of Marriage, Meat and Obsession" (\$25, Little, Brown).

Why were you drawn to meat?

I was fascinated by old-school butcher shops — the smells, sights and men who have been doing it their entire lives. I found the idea of such physical work tantalizing.

What was most surprising about butchering?

You're dealing with hundreds of

pounds of meat, but you have to be so delicate with it. There's a sort of poetry to the way muscles come together and come apart.

Did working at a butcher shop change how you cook meat?

It turned me into a total meat snob. Now, I have to know where my meat comes from. I actually eat less meat, because I'll only eat the good stuff. And I don't do as much to it — no cream sauces or marinades. I want to taste the essence of the meat, so I prepare it simply.

Which tools are essential to meat cooking?

A meat thermometer, which is important if you're doing a roast. If you've got a beautiful Berkshire pork roast and you overcook it, that's heartbreaking. And now,

I use tongs, not a fork, so I don't pierce the meat and lose juices.

You must have tasted a lot of weird foods at the butcher shop.

There's a macho way of eating. People shove things in your mouth. We ate testicles once. I was fine, but you can't really get away from what you're chewing on.

"We ate testicles once. I was fine, but you can't really get away from what you're chewing on."

Any tips on getting the best stuff at the meat counter?

Don't act like you know everything — ask questions. Butchers can be intimidating, but as soon as you get past their gruff exteriors, they'll talk you ear off. They know how different cuts of meat want to be cooked.

What are you cooking for Christmas?

Eric [my husband] usually makes a goose. And I like to go a little crazy and do Cajun or Mexican things.

You cooked your way through Julia Child in a tiny kitchen. Is your kitchen better now?

Our new apartment has a corner kitchen with a nice L-shaped island and a skylight. I don't feel like I'm a scullery maid trapped in a box anymore.

The book also talks about your extramarital affair. Was it hard revealing such personal details?

It was both hard and cathartic. But as a memoirist, I don't do things to write about them. I write about things I do in order to understand them. JENNIFER BARGER (EXPRESS)

Event Horizon | How the Other Half Decorates?

See how lucky downtown dwellers live — and deck the halls — at the Logan Circle Holiday House Tour. The self-guided real estate ogling session features peeks at historic houses and modern condos dressed in yuletide style. Sunday, 1-5 p.m. Buy tickets (\$25) and pick up maps at the Studio Theatre at 1501 14th St. NW.

goods lookout



All the Page This Year

BOOKWORMS TEND TO BE tricky to buy gifts for. (First editions of "Silas Marner" are pricey. Who knows whether Rushdie's latest stinks or soars?) Rebound Designs' new wallets (\$35 each), cut and folded from classic paperback covers, should top the best-seller list at the Downtown Holiday Market (Downtownholidaymarket.com), Dec. 4-23, F St. NW between 7th and 9th streets. They're among crafts from dozens of vendors at the annual bazaar.

Tress Relief

AT \$950 A CROP, hairstylist-to-the-stars Ted Gibson remains the priciest man in the mane biz. For the holidays, he's cutting rates to \$500 at his Friendship Heights outpost (5481 Wisconsin Ave., Chevy Chase; 301-951-4445). Still not in your budget? (Yeah, us neither.) Try his Target line (\$13-\$25, Target stores), which offers color-boosting shampoos, de-frizzing serums and other pro formulas at wallet-friendly prices.

Dome-Cooked Treats

GINGERBREAD MEN and snowman shapes are fine for the kiddos, but we suspect your politico pals will much prefer munching sweets made with this Capitol cookie cutter (\$3.50, Hill's Kitchen, 713 D St. SE, 202-542-1997). And for the lobbyists at your holiday fete, well, something tells us they'll enjoy the symbolic gift of taking a huge bite out of the building.

2



Grab
Bag



Bone Improvement

A MOTLEY CREW OF FAMILY PHOTOS — or a stack of vintage vacation postcards — can morph into a veritable art gallery when displayed in matching frames. Go beyond the black, basic styles at Pottery Barn with Roost's carved bone collection (\$35-\$50, Proper Topper, 1350 Connecticut Ave. NW; 202-842-3055). Their neo-Victorian vibe seems especially suited to botanicals or scientific diagrams.

5



ANSWERS FROM THE SHOE BLOGGER

I work at a software company and managed to survive the past year without getting laid off. But it's now time for the holiday party, a minefield of potential disasters. — LILY

Manolo says, congratulations to the Manolo's friend who prospered in this most difficult of economic conditions!

And now, all of this progress could all be lost in the single moment of unbridled holiday enjoyment/drunk revelry/wardrobe malfunction, when you decide that your black-clad, hipper-than-hip CEO who works from the desk



in the democratically open office (when he is not private-jetting off for Nepal or Cupertino), must be forced into joining the spirited rendition of "Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer."

"Come on, Jeffy, baby! I know you know the words! Wheeee!"

What is that? You say, you did not know that the nog in "Trekkie Brad's Special Egg Nog" was 151-proof rum?

But, at least you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you looked great in your moment of disgrace, especially if you wear these Gumball sandals by Beverly Feldman (\$145, Zappos.com).



Ask the Manolo a question at manolo@shoeblogs.com. Visit the Manolo at shoeblogs.com.

About the Cover

Deck your halls in a very personal way with a tabletop tree expressing your inner self (elf?!, from Target's glittery cone (\$22, Target.com) or retro white model (\$20, some Target stores) to West Elm's eco-tree (\$29, West Elm stores). Photo by Marge Ely.

lookout holiday

Trim With a Twist

A surf of the Web (or a stroll through the fa-la-la-la aisle at Target) reveals that you can deck the halls with such cultural detritus as a guitar-shaped "Hannah Montana" tree ornament, a Darth Vader nutcracker or a Mickey Mouse Advent calendar that speaks in a creepy computer monotone. Some Scroogey factory boss in China probably counts these as highly personal ways to make the yuletide glow, but we think you can bring holiday cheer to your pad and parties by expressing your individuality, not that of an overexposed tween heroine or distressingly cheery cartoon character. Whether you're a "Mad Men" maven or a tree-hugging environmentalist, we have bright ideas for making your Christmas, Hanukkah or winter solstice glow. JENNIFER BARGER (EXPRESS)



Stuff and Good Sense

Hanging the sock you've had since childhood amounts to the most eco-friendly choice, but Amenity's hemp and cotton stocking (\$55, 2modern.com) also packs a low-carbon punch by the java-log fire.

Eco-Friendly

Heating up the globe is no way to warm the hearth this season. "But going eco at the holidays doesn't mean you have to buy things," claims enviro-diva Anna Getty, author of the new book "I'm Dreaming of a Green Christmas" (\$25, Chronicle). "Open up your attic, closet and cupboard, and see what you already have to decorate with." Here are some globe-sensitive ways to be jolly.

Deck the Halls

Think natural and traditional. "Make ornaments from walnut shells, or string a popcorn garland. You can eat as you go!" Getty says. And a real tree is fine (most are grown on sustainable farms), as long as you mulch it afterward.



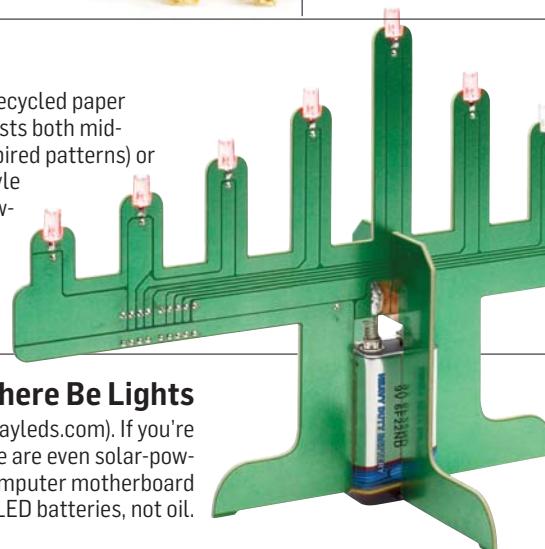
DIY

Instead of buying a fresh wreath that'll just clog up a landfill after Jan. 1, Getty recommends whipping up a homemade one by ripping — er, cutting up — old sweaters. Simply scissor out 250 to 300 2x2-inch squares from out-of-date woolies (fuzzier models work best), then spear them onto a coat hanger bent into a circle. Twist hanger ends to close, then trim with a bow cut from a sweater.



Present Sense

If you must wrap gifts, use recycled paper (Paper Source currently boasts both mid-century mod and Indian-inspired patterns) or Chewing the Cud's Asian-style fabric wraps (\$10 each, Chewingthecud.com).



Let There Be Lights

Festoon your tree with energy-saving LED lights (Holidayleds.com). If you're orchestrating a Baltimore-kitschy display outdoors, there are even solar-powered strings (\$15, Gaiam.com). Roni Kabessa's recycled computer motherboard menorah (shown, \$25, Momastore.org) uses LED batteries, not oil.



Seasonal Sippers

Drink like a locavore with a Virginia bubbly (we like Kluge Estate's) or try Getty's in-season Pomegranate Cocktail (above). For the latter, mix $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sweetened pomegranate juice, 2 tbsp lime juice and 3 tbsp vodka; garnish with pomegranate seeds.



Blasts From the Past

Vintage ornaments (\$4 each; mid-century wooden bowl, \$22, Miss Pixie's) boast a weathered gleam, and "they look great hanging from chandeliers or heaped in oversized brandy snifters," Windsor says.



Tree, Trimmed

Skip plastic ornaments and hook a fair-trade elephant (\$9, Abaca, 1201 N. Royal St., Alexandria; 703-684-2901).

Yuletide Glowing

Fifties-style bubble lights (\$18, Sundance catalog.com) bring a "Leave It to Beaver" vibe to tannenbaums, especially aluminum vintage ones (\$55 and up, Ebay.com).

holiday lookout



DIY

Paper napkins scream Rotary Club Reindeer Picnic: fabric napkins and velvet ribbon holders say regal-yet-mod. To make the rings, cut a 6-inch long piece of 2-inch wide ribbon, fold in half, attaching a D-ring at midpoint. Then, join with no-sew fusible tape (\$5, fabric stores).



Luxe for Just a Few Bucks

"Elegant decorations don't have to be expensive," Schroeder says. "Target has mercury glass votives for 99 cents." These jeweled candle holders look regal, too (\$6 each, SurLaTable.com). Group several together for impact.

Glitz and Glam

You dress up your bod during the holiday season (Sequined shirt — check. Tux — oh, yeah!). So, why not luxe up your pad, too? "Americans have gotten so casual and family-friendly, but I go for sophisticated, grown-up romance," says design blogger Laurie Garone Schroeder of My Domicile Style (Mydomicilestyle.com). "I put out mirrored things and anything that sparkles, from a gold tray to a disco ball." Here's her advice on getting seasonally swank.

Elegant Eats

At her cocktail parties, Schroeder sets out her trademark spicy pecans. To make, preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Spread 2 cups of pecan halves on a cookie sheet lined with parchment paper. Bake 10 minutes. Remove nuts and toss, in a bowl, with 4 tbsp Sriracha chili sauce (reduce if your guests tend to be fiery food-resistant), 1/2 tbsp salt and 1/2 cup brown sugar. Again, spread nuts on cookie sheet, and bake until golden brown, about 10 minutes, turning nuts twice. Spread on foil to cool.

Glitter Patrol

"One of the ways to make things glam without going overboard: Keep things monochrome," says designer David Stark, who created sparkly wreaths and baubles for West Elm (shown, \$12 and up, West Elm stores).



Get Out the Good Stuff

"If you've got serving pieces that are fancier, now's the time to use them," Schroeder says. That means trotting out Grandma's champagne flutes or investing in future heirlooms, such as Sur La Table's Moorish-cool Quatrefoil glasses and cocktail shaker (\$10-\$30).



Ho-Ho Holder

Park old-time treats like Mallomars (\$5 a box, grocery stores) on Alessi's skiing Santa platter (\$69, RCKNDY, 1515 U St. NW; 202-332-5639).



Service, Please

Vintage barware (\$10-\$14 a glass, the Hour, 1015 King St., Alexandria; 703-224-4687) adds Trader Vic chic to a bash.

Retro Spectacular

Don't be bitter that there's no very special Christmas episode of "Mad Men" on the tube. Instead, zap your house back to the future with vintage (or vintage-inspired) party ideas and decor. "Old decorations aren't made in China, and they look handmade," says Pixie Windsor, owner of Miss Pixie's Furnishings & Whatnot (1626 14th St. NW; 202-232-8171). "They bring people back to their childhoods or to an era they wish they'd lived in." Here, she suggests ways to do the holiday time warp.

Backward Bites And Booze

Check out Eisenhower-era editions of Better Homes and Gardens (try flea markets) for recipes (clam dips, Jello molds). For throwback libations, Windsor loves a good punch bowl. "I make one from an old Playboy cookbook," she says. "Use equal parts Sprite, vodka and orange juice, then add a dash of cranberry juice."



DIY

Craft a charmingly retro Tinkertoy tree — using the set you've hung on to since childhood or a new batch (\$30, Amazon.com) — by building spirals of branches from big to small and assembling them by size along a center trunk. So easy, even a kid could do it.

lookout entertainment

The Reelist



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The Fantastic Mr. Micast

The reason George Clooney doesn't work as the title character in "The Fantastic Mr. Fox" goes far beyond the fact that if you get George Clooney, you should show George Clooney. Ide-

ally, with his shirt off.

The problem is that, even as a fox with Cary Grant-like grace and a ravenous taste for chicken, it was still Clooney's voice coming out of that vulpine mouth.

It was startling how unmistakable it was, with that charming gravel running along the bottom. Even though I was looking at a stop-motion animal, I could see Clooney's face delivering the lines as clearly as if his head were atop the lithe body.

Meryl Streep as Mrs. Fox doesn't have the same problem. With her, there's no disconnect between visual and voice. (Mark my words: This Streep chick is going to go far.) And it's not a matter of having a distinctive voice — look at James Gandolfini, who banished any hint of Tony Soprano minutes into his character's appearance in "Where the Wild Things Are."

The irony of Clooney's failing as a fox is pronounced, but he does prove that voice-over work is more than reading a script in an egg-foam room; there's a magic to the madness he didn't quite reach. Just because you have a voice that could drop panties at 50 paces doesn't automatically make you a Fox.



To reach Kristen Page-Kirby,
e-mail inbox@readexpress.com.

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George Clooney fits seamlessly into his role as frigid corporate downsizer Ryan Bingham. Some are calling Clooney's "Up in the Air" performance the best of his career.

A First-Class Feature

'Up in the Air' soars, thanks to its strong script, sublime acting and smart direction

Practically Perfect

"Up in the Air" finds George Clooney in a role he seems to have been born for. There are few things more sublime than Clooney in his comfort zone, and when it happens, the best advice is to sit back, relax and enjoy the flight.

In this case, literally: In "Up in the Air," Clooney plays Ryan Bingham, a corporate downsizer who spends most of his life in airplanes and likes it that way. When he's not busy firing people, he's giving inspirational lectures in which he strews such pearls of wisdom as "Moving is living."

More Praise

Quite the Favorite

"Up in the Air" is the National Board of Review's pick for best film of the year. The last two winners of this award — "No Country for Old Men" and "Slumdog Millionaire" — have gone on to win best picture at the Oscars. The group chose Clooney as best actor, an honor he shares with Morgan Freeman, who plays Nelson Mandela in "Invictus." "Up in the Air" also won best supporting actress for Anna Kendrick and best adapted screenplay. (AP)



'Up in the Air'

- **Director:** Jason Reitman
- **Stars:** George Clooney, Vera Farmiga and Anna Kendrick
- **In a Nutshell:** Ryan Bingham is a corporate downsizer who spends his time traveling and firing people, until two strong women enter his life.
- **For Fans of:** "Michael Clayton," "Thank You for Smoking"

Director Jason Reitman ("Thank You for Smoking," "Juno") has adapted Walter Kirn's novel basically by throwing it out, keeping Bingham's character and inventing two more, a sexy fellow road warrior named Alex (Vera Farmiga) and a young whippersnapper named Natalie (Anna Kendrick), whose ideas about teleconferencing may do unto Ryan what he's been doing unto others all these years.

"Up in the Air" is a smart, supremely entertaining movie, in which Reitman toggles between comedy and drama, satire and soul. For the most part, the film is a swiftly moving picaresque through corporate offices and hotel lobbies, but then Reitman slows things down for a lovely sequence set at a Midwestern wedding.

Perhaps his best move — as if perfect casting and brilliant writing weren't enough — was beginning and ending the movie with interviews with the recently downsized, most of them real-life. These sequences give what could have been a pleasurable enough bagatelle a thoroughly unexpected air of gravitas. "Up in the Air" is a timeless movie that's utterly of its time — a movie of humor, heart and mind.

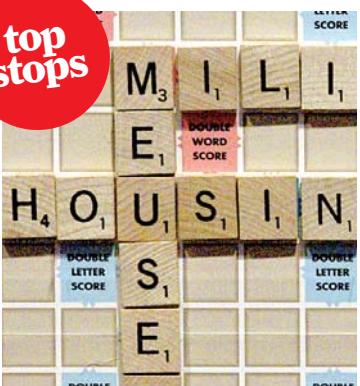
ANN HORNADAY (THE WASHINGTON POST)

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1 Geek Chic

Ever been to a great lecture, and thought, "Man, I love chatting about gastroenterology, but this would be even better with music and beer!"? Awesome, because this Saturday is **D.C. NERD NITE**, an evening of esoteric discussion and live music. A \$10 fee gets you three lectures on various topics — offerings include a talk on Scrabble by author Stefan Fatsis. **F.Z. DC9, 1940 9th St. NW; Sat., 6 p.m.-9 p.m., \$10; 202-483-5000, Nerdnite.com. (U St.-Cardozo)**

2 But It's December

Thanksgiving probably dulled your taste for dysfunctional families, but the characters in Pulitzer Prize-winning play **"AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY"** will make you feel better about the weirdos you got stuck with, at least. **F.Z. Kennedy Center, 2700 F St. NW; through Dec. 20, \$25-\$80; 202-467-4600, Kennedy-center.org. (Foggy Bottom)**

3 The Fifth Freedom

Seventy-six years ago Saturday, the amendment prohibiting alcohol in the U.S. was repealed, and the people rejoiced. D.C. will do it up classy at this year's **REPEAL BALL**, a black-tie event featuring D.C.'s best bartenders. **F.Z. PS 7's, 777 1st NW; Sat., 9 p.m., \$100, \$150 for VIP tickets; 202-742-8550, Dcraftbartendersguild.org. (Gallery Place)**



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Truth Always Hurts

A somber film looks at love through the tarnished lens of war

War Movies

With a running time of slightly less than two hours, "Brothers" isn't an especially lengthy film. But it does take half the movie before the story — about the relationship between a straight-arrow Marine serving in Afghanistan and his ne'er-do-well, ex-con brother back home — really kicks in. When it does, it'll knock the air out of you.

The first part is all meticulous setup, but not a minute is ill-spent.

In 2007, Cap. Sam Cahill (Tobey Maguire) leaves behind his beautiful wife, Grace (Natalie Portman), and two adorable daughters (heartbreakers Baily Madison and Taylor Geare) to fight the Taliban. Early in the film, Sam's helicopter is shot down in the mountains, and he's presumed dead, leaving Grace and the girls to seek solace with Sam's younger brother Tommy (Jake Gyllenhaal), an ice blue-eyed charmer who's fresh out of prison for bank robbery but who redeems himself with his sister-in-law.

Meanwhile, back in Afghanistan, Sam isn't actually dead, just being tortured in a remote Taliban outpost. When he's finally rescued



Tobey Maguire and Jake Gyllenhaal star as siblings of different stripes in "Brothers."

"Brothers"

- **Director:** Jim Sheridan
- **Stars:** Tobey Maguire, Jake Gyllenhaal and Natalie Portman
- **In a Nutshell:** A man goes off to war, suffers horrific experiences and comes home to find his relationship with his family forever altered.
- **For Fans of:** "Jarhead," "Elah," "The Hurt Locker"

and returns home months later, a gaunt, catatonic version of his former self, it's to a family he no longer recognizes and that no longer recognizes him.

This is where the real movie begins. Or, rather, it begins just prior to Sam's return, when some-

thing bad — something real bad — happens to Sam in Afghanistan. Something that turns him into the kind of monster that only war can create and that might leave you wondering whether he wouldn't be better off dead. Sam certainly wonders that.

"Brothers" is the story of that monster and his struggle to find his humanity. Adapted by writer David Benioff and director Jim Sheridan from a 2004 Danish film of the same name, "Brothers" is depressing as hell. And, like most war movies these days, it ends on a note that's far from hopeful. But it's good and wise, and it feels true. Meaning, it hurts. MICHAEL O'SULLIVAN (THE WASHINGTON POST)

TV Beat

An Ugly Fall From Grace

Will ABC's move of "UGLY BETTY" from the Friday-night dead zone to Wednesday be enough to save what was once a watercooler show? The network announced Thursday that "Betty" will begin airing Wednesdays at 10 p.m. in January. But is the move too little too late? On one hand, the Wednesday move does give the fourth-season show a strong lead-in with hit comedy "Cougar Town." On the flip side, "Betty's" most recent episode drew just 3.26 million viewers. And "Betty" has lost more viewers in its new time slot than any other returning show. Drawing fans back to its heavily serialized stories, after many have abandoned it, will be the show's real challenge. (AP)



entertainment lookout



Viggo Mortensen stars as a nameless father traveling through a post-apocalyptic wasteland with his son in "The Road."

Now Playing

THE BLIND SIDE (PG-13, 126 minutes) There's been something off-putting about the ad campaign for this drama about a white woman who adopts an African American high school student, such as posters featuring the patronizing image of Sandra Bullock gently leading her looming, gentle giant of a son down a football field. It turns out the film is much better than its ads, largely because it's based on the true story of Michael Oher and Leigh Anne Tuohy. Grounded in the direct, disarming truth of their experience, the movie has a straightforward lack of cheap sentiment. (AH)

A CHRISTMAS CAROL (PG, 96 minutes) The umpteenth iteration of the holiday classic gets a manic makeover under the direction of Robert Zemeckis, who applies the same motion-capture animation he used to mixed effect in "The Polar Express" to create a fable that is by turns antic, scary, sweet and, in the end, slightly soulless. Just because something can be done with computers doesn't mean it should be. (MO)

AN EDUCATION (PG-13, 100 minutes) Six-

teen-year-old Jenny (Carey Mulligan) lives in London with her anxious, ambitious parents, who are channeling all their postwar striving into aspirations for their bright, pretty daughter. Jenny is headed to Oxford and, presumably, better things when she crosses paths with David (Peter Sarsgaard), a handsome older man. (AH)

FANTASTIC MR. FOX (PG, 87 minutes) Wes Anderson's stop-motion animated adaptation of the Roald Dahl children's book features the voice of George Clooney as the title character, who as the movie opens is stealing squabs. Two years later, he's living in cozy domesticity with Mrs. Fox (voiced by Meryl Streep). He then suffers something of a midlife crisis that threatens his entire community, taking his family and neighbors with him on an "Ocean's Eleven"-type spree. But for the most part, the film ambles along with a genteel, understated sense of whimsy and warmth. (AH)

GOOD HAIR (PG-13, 95 minutes) "Daddy, how come I don't have good hair?" It might be the most loaded and universal question within the black community. And it's the question — asked by his then-5-year-old daughter — that propels comedian Chris Rock throughout a hilariously funny documentary. Rock did not have an answer for his daughter, so he embarked on a madcap tour through beauty and bar-

ber shops, the Bronner Bros. Hair Show and finally India, where the most coveted source material for hair extensions is grown. (AH)

THE MEN WHO STARE AT GOATS (R, 95 minutes) You'd have to be out of your mind to object to watching George Clooney — in full Clark Gable mode, no less — for an hour and a half. But he's part of the problem with this wartime satire that glides along with an easy, slightly gonzo grin on its face but never quite goes anywhere. Clooney is oddly miscast as Lyn Cassady, a former soldier who was recruited to a top-secret psy-ops outfit trying to harness supernatural powers. Ewan McGregor plays a journalist who embeds with Cassady, a psychic master now working as a private contractor. (AH)

NEW MOON (PG-13, 119 minutes) The second film adaptation of author Stephenie Meyer's wildly popular supernatural romance series continues the impossible love story between teenager Bella Swan (Kristen Stewart) and Edward Cullen (Robert Pattinson), a vampire in the body of a preternaturally pale Ralph Lauren model, almost 100 years her senior. It's bad enough that Edward can't decide whether he wants to kill her or kiss her, but when his adoptive brother Jasper (Jackson Rathbone) almost eats

Continued on page 48



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Continued from page 47

Bella after she suffers a paper cut at her 18th birthday party, Edward decides that the best thing for the woman he loves is to leave her. Enter Jacob Black (Taylor Lautner). (MO)

NINJA ASSASSIN (R, 99 minutes) This modern-day tale posits that there are nine clans of deadly, uh, ninja assassins, each made up of warriors trained since childhood. One of the deadly killers, Raizo (South Korean pop star Rain) has fled his clan and is hiding in Berlin. With the help of Mika, a credulous Europol agent (played by a game Naomie Harris), Raizo attempts to bring down his former clan

and its cruel master, Ozunu, in a movie that provides plenty of visual jolts but precious little pleasure. (JA)

OLDDOGS (PG, 88 minutes) Recycling the overly familiar "instant parent" theme, Walt Becker's film has Robin Williams as Dan, a button-down type whose love life has been far less successful than the sports-marketing firm he runs with Charlie (John Travolta). Charlie is, of course,

far more rakish than Dan (everything being relative), and when he drags his partner on an ill-considered Miami vacation, Dan winds up married to Vicki (Kelly Preston). At some point, the two sober up and get an annulment, but seven years later, Vicki shows up and drops off the two kids Dan never knew he had. (JA)

PIRATE RADIO (R, 120 minutes) In mid-1960s England, official British radio was

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entertainment lookout

under the monopoly of the BBC, which played precious little of anything anyone actually wanted to hear. In response, enterprising broadcasters set up offshore radio stations that would spin the latest tunes around the clock. The floating station's on-air talent pool includes headliner Gavin (Rhys Ifans), a prototypic Howard Stern, and a lineup of colorfully nicknamed characters, including the Count (Philip Seymour Hoffman). (MO)

PLANET 51 (PG, 90 minutes) This is a cute film. Cute, however, is a double-edged sword. The animated movie succeeds as a gently wry twist on "E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial," in which the "alien" is a human astronaut (Dwayne Johnson) who gets stuck on a planet of little green men and has to enlist the help of a plucky youngster, Lem (Justin Long), to get home. (MO)

PRECIOUS (R, 109 minutes) Gabourey Sidibe inhabits the title character, Precious Jones, a morbidly obese 16-year-old who lives with her toxically abusive mother, Mary (Mo'Nique), in 1980s Harlem. As the movie opens, Precious learns that she's pregnant with her second child; she is also encouraged to join an alternative education program, where she eventually finds love, acceptance and her own voice in a writing class run by the indefatigable Ms. Rain (the radiant Paula Patton). (AH)

RED CLIFF (R, 148 minutes) Set in the third century, John Woo's epic, kinetic, frenetic jaw-dropper of an action film is about the birth of a modern China. In brief, the powerful Han Empire's scheming prime minister, Cao Cao (Zhang Fengyi), has convinced his feckless emperor to allow a southward campaign to crush the two troublesome warlords—Liu Bei (You Yong) and Sun Quan (Chang Chen)—who stand in the way of a single China. In addition to his lust for power, Cao Cao has another motive—his lust for Xiao Qiao (Chiling Lin), wife of Sun Quan's viceroy, Zhou Yu (Tony Leung) and the Helen of Troy of this epic, poetic romance. Woo, whose bullets-and-ballet esthetic made him the pinnacle of Hong Kong action cinema in the late '80s and '90s, has always had a choreographer's soul, but this indicates that he might, in a past life, have been a military genius. (JA)

THE ROAD (R, 113 minutes) Like "No Country for Old Men," which is also based on a Cormac McCarthy book, this film's philosophical and aesthetic seriousness serve mostly to point out the essentially shal-

low mannerisms of their source material. Among McCarthy's blessings here is Viggo Mortensen, who delivers a haunting, deeply felt performance as a nameless man leading his young son (newcomer Kodi Smit-McPhee) through a landscape charred by an unspecified disaster. Even with the momentary visual relief of flashbacks to an earlier, happier life, the film finally resembles little more than a

highfalutin' zombie movie with literary pretensions. (MO)

2012 (PG-13, 158 minutes) Starting with the long-held misapprehension that the Mayan calendar picks 2012 as the date of humanity's doom, director Roland Emmerich fleshes out that bit of pseudo-history with some pseudoscience—some nonsense about solar flares, and neutrinos heating the Earth's core—and throwshun-

dreds of millions of dollars at it. (DK)

WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE (PG, 101 minutes) Spike Jonze's movie is one that manages to create its own reality and meaning, even while it brings Maurice Sendak's visual world to life with startling accuracy. Jonze populates Max's world with an indifferent sister and a single mother (Catherine Keener), whose date ignites the tantrum. Max (Max Records) runs

out of the house and develops a friendship with one of the wild things, Carol (James Gandolfini), whose explosive anger Max instinctively recognizes. (AH)

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MUSIC RANDALL POSTER RICK CLARK EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS TOM POLLOCK, JOE MEDJUCK, TED GRIFFIN, MICHAEL BEGG
SUPERVISORS DANIEL DUBIECKI PRODUCED BY JASON REITMAN, DANIEL DUBIECKI, JEFFREY CLIFFORD BASED UPON THE NOVEL BY WALTER KIRK
PRODUCED BY JASON REITMAN, DANIEL DUBIECKI, JEFFREY CLIFFORD, BASED UPON THE NOVEL BY WALTER KIRK
BY JASON REITMAN, SHAWN TURNER DIRECTED BY JASON REITMAN

RESTRICTED
R UNDER 17 REQUIRES ACCOMPANYING PARENT OR ADULT GUARDIAN
LANGUAGE AND SOME SEXUAL CONTENT

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TV weekend lookout

Classic, With a Twist

Carroll's beloved book gets a strange treatment in 'Alice'

Liberties Taken

SYFY 9:00 Imagine a reworking of "Alice in Wonderland" with the title character (Caterina Scorsone) as a commitment-phobic karate instructor. Then imagine she falls down the rabbit hole and crashes through the looking glass while searching for her missing boyfriend after he's been dragged away to some loft-ridden futuristic Canadian slum. Then imagine you could actually watch such a story for four hours, and you'd be the target audience for "Alice" (9 p.m., Sunday and Monday, SyFy).



Caterina Scorsone, right, stars as a modern-day Alice who works as a karate teacher.

"Alice" is frequently dazzling to behold. Unfortunately, this "Alice" is as incomprehensible as it is visually stunning.

A who's-who of performers from Kathy Bates to Tim Curry, Colm Meaney and Harry Dean Stanton distract us from some baffling, metaphor-laden plot about

human "oysters" being harvested to make synthetic drugs that mimic real emotions.

Its one-darn-thing-after-another plot will make little sense to those vaguely familiar with Lewis Carroll's fable and is probably utterly opaque to those who aren't. **KEVIN MCDONOUGH**

(UNITED FEATURE SYNDICATE)

Best Bets

NBC 8:00



A Muppets Christmas: Letter to Santa (FRI.)

When Kermit and company accidentally intercept three children's letters to St. Nick, they vow to hand-deliver them to the North Pole themselves with a little help from their friends. Whoopi Goldberg, Tony Sirico and Madison Pettis ("Cory in the House") are among their human co-stars in this special.

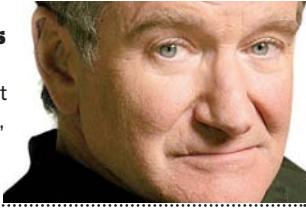
LIFE 8:00

12 Men of Christmas (SAT.) Kristin Chenoweth stars in this rom-com about a down-on-her-luck woman who raises funds for a rescue team by producing a steamy calendar of its hunky men.

HBO 8:00

Robin Williams: Weapons Of Self-Destruction (SUN.)

The head-spinning comic performs at DAR Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C., in an act that includes candid riffs on his own life.



CBS 8:00

The Amazing Race 15 (SUN.) Now the final teams must pour on a last burst of speed and keep their wits in order as they tackle their final challenges, then sprint to the finish line.

FOX 8:00

Family Guy (SUN.) Brian is sad when he hears that his ex (Drew Barrymore) is getting hitched but wonders whether "Hills" star Lauren Conrad (as herself) might be his soulmate. (TRIBUNE MEDIA)

PhD in Public Policy

Information Session

Wednesday, December 9, 7 p.m.
Arlington Campus
3401 Fairfax Drive, Room 329



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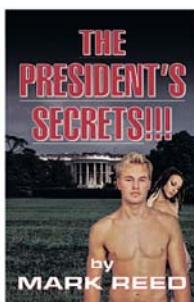
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Poll Center

Today's Question

HAVE TIGER WOODS' RECENT 'TRANSGRESSIONS' CHANGED YOUR OPINION OF HIM?

VOTE AT EXPRESSNIGHTOUT.COM OR TEXT A FOR YES OR B FOR NO TO 98999

Thursday's Results

DO YOU THINK PRESIDENT OBAMA'S WAR GOALS ARE REALISTIC?

56% 44%

— NO — YES —

"The decision took too long, and his speech seemed to hint at serious reservations about our resolve to continue fighting. He looked uneasy speaking to the military audience. It is a shame, because he made a courageous choice in the face of enormous pressure."

COMMENTER ANOTHER PERSON

SEE HOW YOUR METRO STATION VOTED AT WWW.EXPRESSNIGHTOUT.COM



"The first 'Iron Man 2' poster was crammed with goodness: The suit! War Machine! A mighty Marvel team-up! The second poster, to be used outside the United States, gets rid of all those things."

— BLOG.ZAP2IT.COM IS NOT IMPRESSED WITH THE NEWEST MARKETING MATERIAL FOR THE COMIC BOOK MOVIE SEQUEL STARRING ROBERT DOWNEY JR.



"Even if Tiger is guilty of everything he's accused of and 10 times more, THREE HUNDRED MILLION DOLLARS? ... Elin should be well compensated for what he's done to her, but, seriously?"

— WWTDD.COM IS FLABBERGASTED BY REPORTS THAT TIGER WOODS' WIFE, ELIN NORDEGREN, SIGNED A PRENUPTIAL AGREEMENT THAT WOULD GRANT HER \$300 MILLION IF THEY DIVORCED.



Blog Log

"With every new round of concussions in the NFL, it seems to me that the press and the NFL react as if dangerous concussions were a new issue in football."

— **MICHAEL PHELAN** OF RICHMOND.INJURYBOARD.COM REACTS TO NEWS THAT NFL COMMISSIONER ROGER GOODDELL THURSDAY IMPOSED NEW, STRICTER REGULATIONS AGAINST ALLOWING CONCUSSIONED PLAYERS TO RETURN TO PLAY.



"IS THIS HOMOPHOBIA at its worst, or is ABC simply trying to protect itself from the big, bad FCC?"

— POPONTHEPOP.COM FINDS IT UNSETTLING THAT THE NETWORK CANCELED SINGER ADAM LAMBERT'S "GOOD MORNING AMERICA" AND "NEW YEAR'S ROCKIN' EVE" APPEARANCES AFTER THE FALLOUT FROM HIS AMERICAN MUSIC AWARDS PERFORMANCE.



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puzzles lookout

Horoscope

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21) You can have fun, and you can also progress and develop your skills. It doesn't have to be one or the other.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) You're going to have to make a few hard choices but not before you stake your claim to something you've counted on for some time.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18) You may not have a clear idea of where, exactly, you're heading, but the journey itself is likely to offer you much satisfaction.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20) You can afford to be a little more demonstrative when it comes to friends and loved ones. They want to know how you feel.

ARIES (March 21-April 19) Try to see things from all sides if you're going to prepare fully for a conflict of ideas that is coming your way.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20) The details may be hanging you up, even though you have a good understanding of the big picture. Focus on the little things.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20) Time spent alone affords you the opportunity to reflect more carefully on the things you have done and the things you'll do very soon.

CANCER (June 21-July 22) You are certainly your toughest critic, but even you have to admit that you're doing things the right way overall.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22) You may feel as though something is hanging over you — and, indeed, there are pressing issues that will soon require attention.

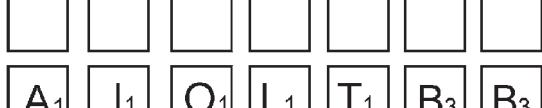
VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) Don't put others off when speaking freely about your own feelings. Don't fall into any inappropriate behavior.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22) You're after something that may still be out of reach, but that's precisely the reason you keep up the pursuit. Don't get frustrated.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21) Someone is likely to open your eyes to a few opportunities that you've overlooked in the past. It's never too late to make a positive change.

Scrabble Grams

PAR SCORE 145-155, BEST SCORE 217



Yesterday's Solution

A ₁	N ₁	G ₂	I ₁	N ₁	A ₁		RACK 1 = 7
S ₁	U ₁	F ₄	F ₄	I ₁	C ₃	E ₁	RACK 2 = 80
S ₁	T ₁	A ₁	M ₃	I ₁	N ₁	A ₁	RACK 3 = 59
D ₂	I ₁	C ₃	K ₅	E ₁	N ₁	S ₁	RACK 4 = 68
							PAR SCORE 145-155
							TOTAL 214

3rd Letter Double

Triple Word Score

FOUR RACK TOTAL

Make a 2-7 letter word from the letters in each row. Add points of each word using scoring directions at right. 7-letter words get a 50-point bonus. Blank tiles used as any letter have no point value. Scrabble is a trademark of Hasbro in the U.S. and Canada.

Sudoku

DIFFICULT

4	6	7	
9		5	1
5	6	4	
6	2	1	5
8	4	9	6
	2	6	8
2	7	3	
9	5	4	4

Yesterday's Solution

5	8	4	1	6	2	9	3	7
7	6	1	3	9	5	8	2	4
2	3	9	4	8	7	5	1	6
4	5	2	7	3	1	6	9	8
9	7	8	6	2	4	3	5	1
6	1	3	9	5	8	7	4	2
8	2	6	5	1	9	4	7	3
3	9	7	2	4	6	1	8	5
1	4	5	8	7	3	2	6	9

Need more Sudoku? Find another puzzle in the Comics section of The Post every Sunday and in the Style section Monday through Saturday.

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Comics

POOCH CAFE | PAUL GILLIGAN



FIND MORE COMICS AT EXPRESSNIGHTOUT.COM

PEARLS BEFORE SWINE | STEPHAN PASTIS



Forecast



51 | 37

Today: Sun mixing with high clouds and cooler today. Mostly cloudy tonight.



42 | 31

Tomorrow: Colder tomorrow with snow and rain. Snow and rain tomorrow night.

Looking Ahead



SUN



MON



TUE

44 | 31 | 46 | 34 | 49 | 37

Sun and Moon

Sunrise today: 7:11 a.m.
Sunset today: 4:46 p.m.
Moonrise today: 7:22 p.m.
Moonset today: 9:35 a.m.

Almanac

Normal high: 51
Record high: 70
Normal low: 35
Record low: 15

FORECAST BY ACCUWEATHER.COM ©2009



SAD

Man Grows Old, Fails to Grow Up

Aging rocker Ronnie Wood of the Rolling Stones was released on bail Thursday after being arrested for possible domestic assault. Wood was picked up by police Wednesday evening near his home in Esher, England. "I can confirm that there was an incident last night and that Ronnie Wood was arrested," said David Rigg, Wood's spokesman. (AP)

HONORS

Future Service Areas of New Jersey

The newest members of New Jersey's Hall of Fame include Jack Nicholson, Danny DeVito and Susan Sarandon; musicians Les Paul and Count Basie; and authors Philip Roth and Judy Blume, it was announced Thursday. Rounding out the list of honorees are baseball player Larry Doby; women's rights advocate Alice Paul; astronaut Wally Schirra; and singer Frankie Valli. New Jerseyans helped select the winners online. (AP)



JASON MERRITT/GETTY IMAGES



MUNCHKINS

Santa Brings Little Elf A New Co-Hosting Gig

ABC has offered George Stephanopoulos the coveted job of co-hosting "Good Morning America," and intensive negotiations are under way, sources said Thursday. He has not yet accepted the job. As the discussions have dragged on for weeks, Stephanopoulos has pushed for a role reshaped to spotlight his interest in politics and hard news rather than feature segments.

(THE WASHINGTON POST)



CULT LEADERS

Always Trust Me, Subjects

A judge threw out a copyright-infringement lawsuit against "Twilight" author Stephenie Meyer Thursday, MTV.com reported. Jordan Scott accused Meyer of stealing plot points from her book "The Nocturne" for the fourth "Twilight" book, "Breaking Dawn." "This judgment confirms what we have known all along — 'Breaking Dawn' is a wholly original work by Stephenie Meyer and this was a frivolous lawsuit brought for the purposes of publicizing the plaintiff's personal publishing aspirations," said Hachette Book Group, Meyer's publisher. (EXPRESS)



"There are plenty of fame whoring celebs that WANT you in their business, leave those who dont [sic] alone."

— ADRIENNE CURRY, PERENNIAL FIXTURE OF THE REALITY TV LANDSCAPE, ON THE TIGER WOODS SCANDAL.

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